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CARMAGNOLA

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CARMAGNOLA:

An Italian Tale

OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.

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An Italian Tale

OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.

A POEM IN FIVE CANTOS.

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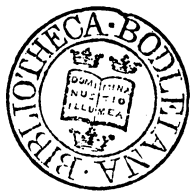

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PREFATORY NOTICE.

THE following tale is to be found in any of the old Italian histories, now happily superseded by the great works of Simonde de Sismondi and Daru. Extracts from these and other modern authors, confirmatory of the main incidents of the Poem, and showing the slight historical variation in point of time only, which, for the sake of simplicity and unity, the Author has thought fit to make, are given in the Notes.

CARMAGNOLA.

CANTO FIRST.

I.

There is a land where earth, and sea, and sun,
Their loveliest hues in every season wear,
Where life is luxury, and health is won,
Like light, unsought, in ever-fragrant air;—
'Tis Italy, 'tis Italy the fair,
The chosen spot where nature, art, and taste,
By learning fostered, gorgeous symbols bear
Of all that Heaven within man's power hath placed,
To smoothe his rugged path through life's else dreary waste.

II.

Oh land of letters, music, love, and ease,
What tongue can tell or heart conceive aright,
The transports which the glowing bosom seize,
When first thy beauties burst upon the sight!
When from the snowy verge of Alpine height,
Or Como's sainted banks, or Baia's bay,
Each wondering sense imbibes a new delight,
As if some vale of Heaven before them lay,
And the rapt soul dissolves in ecstacy away!

III.

There is a land of infamy and crime,
Unmatched on earth, and not outdone in hell,
Of ravage licenced in each varying time
Of kings, and priests, and people yet more fell;—
Of man's atrocities all annals tell,
And every land has been of blood the field,
In some dire days of vengeance wreaked too well;
But all their horrors, hidden and revealed,
To Italy's black list the dreadful palm must yield.

IV.

And must I from its pages take my tale,
While by its side a fairer record lies,
Must perfidy and cruelty prevail,
While innocence in vain for justice cries!
Alas, when truth the poet's theme supplies,
How rarely justice crowns the closing line!
Vice lives triumphant, virtue suffering dies,
Howe'er inventive fancy may combine
Short-sighted man's desires with God's decrees divine!

V.

When Milan flourished as a ducal realm,
Philip Visconti, latest of the race
That ruled it like the serpent in their helm,
In battle field had ever victor's place
Through one who led his ranks, of birth so base,
That to his sires not e'en his name he owed;
For on his native town, by fortune's grace,
The humble Carmagnola, was bestowed
The double fame that from his birth and sir-name
flowed.

VI.

He loved his master for a gift he gave,
Than aught but honour to his soul more dear,
The fair Filippa, gentle as the wave
That sleeps on Como's bank at sunset clear;
But she was daughter of a sire severe
To all save her, and for a time her lord,
And oft her boding soul some hour would fear,
When in her breast no longer could accord
A sire's affection stern with husband's love adored.

VII.

One night the ducal place with crowds was filled,
Lord Carmagnole's long hoped return to wait,
And with a grateful joy each bosom thrilled,
To see his honoured dame in regal state;
High on a terraced balcony she sate,
And owned their vivas with responsive soul,
Her infant boy leapt in her arms elate,
And down her cheek a tear of transport stole
At each loud shout of Carmagnola, Carmagnole!

VIII.

With other thoughts her father heard it ring,
For to his heart a thrill of rage it sent,—
Long time had jealousy's envenomed sting
With Carmagnola's fame his bosom rent;
While on his ruin secretly intent,
His certain coming now he, cautious, stayed,
That joyous shout his tyrant prudence spent,
And in a moment to one mind betrayed
A dark design conceived, though till fit time delayed.

IX.

For ere the shout was to a murmur hushed,
His presence changed the gladness into gloom,
And, furious, to the startled child he rushed,
With eyes that its destruction seemed to doom:
Its mother's sudden shriek gave reason room
To check him in the path where fury led,
But ere his wonted mien he could resume,
Enough a wife and mother's eye had read,
A tyrant's smothered hate t' anticipate and dread.

X.

With ill-feigned courtesy he smiled and bowed,
And stammered prince's thanks to all around,
Some sudden spell seemed cast upon the crowd,
That in disloyal silence held them bound;
In quick retreat relief the tyrant found,
Filippa followed, trembling, faint, and pale,
With her saved babe; night's shades o'erspread the ground,
All nature slept beneath her sombre veil,
All save the poet's love, the plaintive nightingale.

XI.

All nature slept, and mankind seemed to sleep,—
But ah! th' unwilling watchers who shall tell,
Who writhe in torture, or in sorrow weep,
Nor cease, except in death, at matin bell!
Or those who groundless terrors cannot quell
Of coming evils, dark and undefined,
Mysterious warnings known to all too well,
Whom heart-knit ties to absent objects bind,
When doubts and fears distract the never absent mind.

XII.

Of these, in sight of Milan's walls, there stood
A mounted cavalier, with helm and steel,
Muffled in military cloak and hood,
As seeking e'en from darkness to conceal
What light, thro' such disguise, could scarce reveal;
So still and motionless his steed and he,
That passer-by their presence could not feel,
Or if so near as forms distinct to see,
Some statue they would seem athwart the midnight lea.

XIII.

Hush! hark!—it *is* a rustling—yet so low
As in such silence only could be heard,
For scarce the courser's ears attention show,
Till on the nearer ground some object stirred;
Is it the wolf, or mountain cat, or bird
Of evil omen? No; it is the tread
Of human foot; and one concerted word,
At distance whispered, banishes the dread
Of secret foe or spy for evil thither led.

XIV.

Lo! now the eager horseman forward leans,
While he who seeks him stretches to his ear,
And, though no space between them intervenes,
They whisper still, as though they listeners fear.
"Seized, said'st thou!"—"Hush, his minions may be near,
I saw them watch me as..."—"What minions, knave?
If this thou say'st be sooth, I lag not here
To listen more, for, by my helm and glaive,
I sleep not till revenged on this ungrateful slave!"

XV.

"Oh, my good lord, his fury do not brave,—
Pardon,—my lady's errand's told, not mine;—
She sends her infant's threatened life to save,
I come, alas! to guard from treachery thine.
I heard Visconti mutter a design
To seize thee ere thou reached the outer gate,
And some retainers of his serpent line
Ev'n now approach his will to antedate,—
By Heav'n, I heard them ordered to arrest thee straight."

XVI.

Lord Carmagnole ('twas he,) with rage was dumb,
His blood seemed checked a moment in its course,
Then as past things to memory did come,
Rushed to each straining pore with trebled force;
His speech awhile hung faltering at its source,
But his clenched hand and knotted forehead spoke,
And when words came, 'twas scarcely man's discourse,
But bursting gasps that from his bosom broke,
So felly anger bound him in her iron yoke!

XVII.

"Was it for this! arrested, said'st thou!—No!
While life and strength still keep this battered frame—
Filippa, too! my boy!"—his voice sunk low
As to his thoughts his wife and infant came;
Dear was his glory, dear his martial fame,
No treach'rous tyrant could assail him there,—
But the loved boy thenceforth to bear his name,—
His mother who his glories was to share,—
Ah! *they* were in a tyrant's power,—despair, despair!

XVIII.

The attendant squire his master's nature knew,
And checked not by reply his furious vein,
But unobserved, the courser gently drew
To space more distant from the townward plain;
Examined girth and belt, and bridle rein,
As though foreseeing their immediate need,
Then with discreet presumption spoke again;
Of absent comrades asked, caressed the steed,
Patted his ample chest, and praised his well-known speed.

XIX.

Ah me! how oft the warrior's hard won bays
In youthful breasts excites the envious sigh!
How oft the idol of the people's praise
Seems the most blest of men to vulgar eye!
Deluded dreamers, could ye look more nigh,
Ye would behold his soul with anguish riven,
His body broken down with agony,
From home, peace, parents, wife and children driven,
All for that lofty state for which your sighs are given!

XX.

What were to Carmagnola power, renown,
Th'applause of millions—e'en the love of some,—
For of the shouts that grant the public crown,
There are that from unchanging bosoms come;
Far happier he had eulogy been dumb,
More real bliss possessing all unknown,
With an unenvied spear or humble drum,
Than by fame's loudest trump his merits blown,
Himself th' expectant heir of an illustrious throne!

XXI.

Rage had its triumph, but subsided soon,
Like other triumphs, into gloomy calm,
Necessity and hope, that ever tune
Discordant minds, to reason gave the palm;—
I know not wherefore, but a sudden qualm,
As if for secret sin or broken vow,
Seemed to embitter consolation's balm,
And as he smote his agitated brow,
"Holy St. Mark," he said, "I own thy influence now."

XXII.

But 'twas no longer time to think; to act
With soldier's promptitude he now prepared;
In all he heard foul treachery he tracked,
And malice deep, tho' not till now declared;
His watchful vassal all his feelings shared,
Saint Mark's great name the thrilling thought inspired,
That 'neath his flag Visconti might be dared,
And well the knave by practice had acquired
The skill to scan the thoughts his master's breast that fired.

XXIII.

"So please my gracious general," he said,
"The lion now is slumbering o'er his book,
But when he wakes, as soon he will, I dread,
The serpent in his path he will not brook!
I dreamt that in his paw a snake he took,
And crushed it to the venom in its crest,—
Who was the snake, my lord, but Milan's duke,
And whose the hand that down the reptile prest,
But Milan's noblest knight's, in arms of Venice drest!"

XXIV.

"'Tis true!" Lord Carmagnole exclaimed in haste,
And with the word his brazen helm unbound,
With sudden wrench its glistening snake displaced,
And dashed it, fierce and furious, on the ground;
"So may thy living prototype be found,
And all beneath whose banner thou art worn,
Detested badge, unowned and unrenowned,
And never in a victor's battle borne,
Till on the helm whence now thou art for ever torn!"

XXV.

Scarce had he ceased, when sudden on his ear,
As if with danger his design to stamp,
A sound arose, at distance first, then near,
Of steel-clad cavalry in clattering tramp;
'Twas royal horse, to Carmagnola's camp,
At western verge of Milan's bounds that lay,
Speeding o'er mound and meadow, marsh and swamp,
Their master's order eager to obey,
For Carmagnole's arrest before the break of day!

XXVI.

Moment of mental agony intense!
For on the track where Carmagnole now stood,
Of that immeasureable moor immense,
Alone was solid ground and footing good!
Retreat would not discovery elude,
Advance or pause, were instant death or chains,—
They come,—they keep the track by usage hewed,—
Nor ground nor darkness now their pace restrains,—
Ten paces more,—they see,—and nought of hope remains.

XXVII.

But not in blank inaction had been passed
The precious space of notice given from far,
Nor knight nor squire in coward's mould were cast,
Nor meanly skilled in marsh and midnight war;
Bounding like startled stag o'er bank or bar,
The light-limbed squire across the mead had sprung,
And now was heard, as if in angry jar
With the advancing horse, that wavering hung,
Uncertain of their course, the reeds and brakes among.

XXVIII.

"Off to the left, or by Saint Mary's Cross,"
('Twas thus the wily squire his purpose veiled,)
"A bow-shot more you sink girth-deep in moss,
And had you passed, all human power had failed
To keep you by the waters unassailed;
The Tesin's up, the Adda thunders o'er
The plains where Lambro has not yet prevailed,
The Var and Aar their tides together pour;
Hark how the hundred floods of Po and Dora roar!"

XXIX.

'Twas said,—but sound of rivers, save their names,
Was heard not, nor was felt the ground unsure,
But fear of ills unseen the senses shames;
Thus to the horsemen's frightened minds, the moor
With rivers ran, its surface, insecure,
Seemed now to sink beneath their gathering weight,
They listened gladly to the treach'rous lure
That promised safety from their threatened fate,
And from their dubious path their steps to extricate.

XXX.

Wheeling their steeds at madly rapid rate,
They follow as directs their unseen guide,
All from the track diverging, till too late
T' advance, recede, or safely to abide;
For now deep bogs abound on every side,
And pitfalls, dark and dismal as the tomb,
Where reptiles congregate and vermin hide,
And all is silence, solitude, and gloom,
Save the roused landrail's shriek, or bittern's sullen boom.

XXXI.

Entangled thus inextricably deep,
They groped till day their misery relieved,
While their betrayer turned the fruits to reap,
Of stratagem completed as conceived;
Little, I wot, for comrades' woes he grieved,
Or more his own half-drowned condition 'plained,
(For in deep pools his deed had been achieved,)
One single purpose in his bosom reigned,
To save his honoured lord, all danger he disdained.

XXXII.

Oh! it is good to see the human heart,
Untutored in the world's deceitful school,
Ere by experience taught distrustful art,
Become in Nature's hand a willing tool;
Far, far from me the frigid formal fool,
(Less known in other lands than, England, thine,)
Who never breaks th' aristocratic rule,
To menial state his menials to confine,
And never friend and master's characters combine.

XXXIII.

Let such my Carmagnola's course condemn,
When, brother-like, his vassal he embraced,
Nor strove a flood of gratitude to stem,
For life and liberty in safety placed;
Short time was their's in useless words to waste,
But ere the start for life or death was made,
Some cogent counsels, suited to the haste
Of the approaching flight, the squire conveyed,
That scarce for horse than rider less regard displayed.

XXXIV.

"Speed me good speed, dear master, to the brook
That parts the field, St. Martin's Mantle named,
There breathe, while tow'rds Mount Rosa's base you look
For the small lamp by Ambrose' hermit framed;
If you descry it, night may still be claimed
Enough the outer lines unseen to pass,
And thence, with breath unbroken, blood untamed,
To reach St. Angelo's ere matin mass,
And so to Caravaggio's Cross; there rest a glass.

XXXV.

"My master needs not lesson from his groom,
Of what to willing well-worked steed is due,
But spur him not, and give him bridle room,
He will, unguided, keep the track in view;
A drench of Asti will his strength renew,
And when you pass the Adda at the ford,
Let him go free and slow the current through,
You there another breathing may afford,
And lighter work to Oglio waits my noble lord.

XXXVI.

"Now good Saint Mark for pardon intercede,
If to believe his visions be a sin,—
For sure as now my hand is on this steed,
I see him leap the Lion's bounds within;
I hear the Pantaleone's shouts begin,
As near and nearer to their shores you draw,
From Lido's ridge to Chioggia peals the din,—
Hark how they shout from bark and gondola,
God and St. Mark for Carmagnole! Viva!—viva!"

XXXVII.

Oh it had been a gallant sight to see
On battle field or tournamenting ground,
That noble steed, as if with kindred glee,
Toss his mailed forehead at the joyous sound;
Then as his arching neck more free he found,
Rear on his haunch erect, and paw the air,
As though intent for one triumphant bound,
Each eager nerve and sinew to prepare
Thro' danger's deepest paths his lord unhurt to bear.

XXXVIII.

One long drawn sigh, with upraised eye and hand,—
One wondering thought at fate that urged him on,—
One sentence, half of counsel, half command,—
One word half whispered,—Carmagnole is gone;
A fugitive, a renegade, alone,
Where late a chief of chiefs he did excel
In glory, love, and lealty to the throne;
Like arrow-shot he flies,—God speed him well,
Whilst I relate events in Milan that befel.

CARMAGNOLA.

CANTO SECOND.

I.

Thy spires and palaces, fair Milan, rise
  Like lustrous jewels on Italia's breast,
Sparkling beneath thy ever-sunny skies,
  They speak religion, loyalty, and rest.
Sweet city, now with peace and safety blest,
  Thou smilest o'er thy children's joys, serene,
As widowed mother, now no more opprest
  With anguish past, but in each present scene
Forgetting for a time the anguish that hath been.

II.

Not thus thy earlier and prouder day,
When by Visconti's iron race enthralled,
Or under Sforza's firm but fiery sway,
Whom partial fate from spade to sceptre called;
The power that time and arms have now installed
In thy dominions, lightly holds the rein,
And though not quite uncurbed, thou art ungalled,
And seemest willingly to wear the chain
That potentates and priests have bound on thee again.

III.

Genius of Song, if it indeed be thou
That mov'st me thus when of my theme I think,
Oh with thy highest powers inspire me now,
That to harmonious numbers I may link
Filippa's woes! oh, deeply let me drink
Of the soft fount that beauty's tears supplies,
More precious than the pearl that on the brink
Of th' ocean cave of rich Pactolus lies,
Robbing the sun of light, the water-bow of dyes!

IV.

Where is, or was, or will be that blest land
Where public knee to private virtue bows?
Where do the columns, temples, statues stand,
In homage to a parent, child, or spouse?
Greek, Roman, Christian worship binds the brows
Of heroes, poets, conquerors, and kings,
But to domestic virtue nought allows;
Wherefore but that in heaven that virtue springs,
While earth and earth's rewards are left for earthly things!

V.

Tell me, ye servile, ever ready throng,
Bards, sculptors, painters, flatterers of a day,
Whose works alone the memory prolong
Of men and deeds which else had drooped away,—
Tell me what humble merits from decay,
What private Trajans, Antonines, ye've saved;
Where are your epics, marbles, frescoes, say,
For those who every human ill have braved,
Conqu'ring where conq'rors fell, defeated and enslaved!

VI.

If of the virtues of domestic life,
One claims a homage higher than the rest,
'Tis the young mother's, widowed though a wife,
By friends abandoned, and by foes oppressed;
See where she sits, her infant at her breast,
Around her neck the miniature adored,—
God! what a look was there, as first she kissed
The dead then living image of her lord,—
Faith, love, and hope's last looks seemed there to have been stored!

VII.

So sat Filippa, sleepless though 'twas dawn,
That on her knee her infant still might sleep,
Pale as the linen garment round her drawn,
In ample folds along the ground that sweep.
In that gray light, and in that silence deep,
You saw some marble group, you might have deemed,
Where guardian angel sat, from harm to keep
A sleeping seraph while of heaven it dreamed,—
So still and monumental child and mother seemed.

VIII.

And at that moment, while the sun yet gleamed
On the far Alpine ridge of Julian fame,
Ere on Filippa's lattice he had beamed,
Insensible as marble she became!
Exhausted nature's long resisted claim
At length allowed, gave solace to her woes,
And for a while her agitated frame
Was sunk in the confused but deep repose
That the tired body only, not the spirit, knows.

IX.

Her eyes were shut, yet still her child she saw,
Her ear, unconscious of external sound,
Still heard within, by mind's mysterious law,
The shouts of men that seemed to stand around;
Anon a demon rises from the ground,
A form well known and still revered he takes,
To snatch the child he springs with furious bound,—
She shrieks, and with her shriek th' illusion breaks,—
More firm she clasps her babe, and with the effort wakes.

X.

She wakes,—but ah, it is not all a dream!
That hideous demon still before her stands;
Scared for a moment, haply, by her scream,
Rage on his brow his guilty purpose brands:
The infant shrinks instinctive from his hands,
"Father!" Filippa said, (by use beguiled,
For recent fears had loosed paternal bands)—
"Father!"—she gazed in doubt, her eyes rolled wild,—
"Father, canst *thou* seek to destroy thy daughter's child?"

XI.

Tyrant as was Visconti, he could feel
For that last object of his love and care,
And as he listened to the wild appeal,
His base design once more he could not dare:
Contending passions seemed his breast to tear,
Distrust and doubt, with love and hate combined;
He paced the room with agitated air,
He spoke not, save the language of the mind,
That universal tongue to no one land confined.

XII.

That universal, never varying tongue,
That knows no word of joy, no joyous tone,
But from the bosom's inmost organs wrung,
Speaks in the long-drawn sigh and dreary groan:
Vain man, that claim'st as thy exclusive own
The idiot symbol of unhallowed mirth,
More just, alas! thy judgment had been shown,
Claiming the tears that claim thee at thy birth,
Nor leave thee till thou leavest earth's pursuits or earth.

XIII.

"I am resolved," Visconti now exclaimed,
"That child, Filippa, is hateful to my sight,
His father to subvert my throne has aimed,
And thou and he the Milan mob excite;
I saw their rebel blood inflamed last night,
When thou, false child, but doubtless faithful wife,
Could'st scarce contain thy traitorous delight,
To hear their savage shouts presaging strife,
For Carmagnole, for treason, blood, and rapine rife.

XIV.

" No words—but that I fear thy brittle life
Hangs on that child's, I'd tear him from thy arms;
Nay, in my service some avenging knife,—
Thou faintest—he shall live, then, free from harms,
Thy weakness still thy father's heart alarms;
Look up, thy boy shall live, I say again,—
Visconti's blood his little bosom warms,—
Yes, clasp him close,—he lives, but henceforth vain
His father's hopes and thine that he shall live to reign.

XV.

" Thou must leave Milan—there are things of state
That might afflict thee; thou must hence with speed,
Our great designs for women must not wait,
Nor wives nor daughters our decrees impede;
Thou must leave Milan,—Speak not—'tis decreed,
Within an hour thy escort shall attend;
When from some threatening traitors we are freed,
Thou and perhaps thy babe may hither wend,—
Farewell,—more fates than thine upon this hour depend."

XVI.

He ceased, and from the chamber quickly flew,
As fearing nature's influence o'er his heart,
One human throb he felt, its power he knew,
By past experience, his designs to thwart;
While swift he sped his orders to impart,
His victim still sat trembling at his voice;
Her child once more was saved—nor force nor art
Should tear him from her, e'en were death the choice,
Were death to save his life, to die were to rejoice.

XVII.

But in a stated hour's eventful space
What vast revulsions hap in human things;
What changes, what extremes of change have place
In nations and in nature! Fortune flings
The bauble empire 'mongst contending kings
To win or lose,—a slave she seats in power,
A king enslaves; death on pestiferous wings
Sweeps o'er whole continents with rapid scour,
The world itself may be unpeopled—in an hour!

XVIII.

What art thou, world? Fate, chance, howe'er we
name
That thing that seems to rule thee—what art *thou?*
Rul'st thou alone in this terrestrial frame,
Are ye coeval, were ye aye as now,
Eternal, or of time? Vain man, allow
That thy philosophy's profoundest lore
Shows the world wisely ruled, not whence or how;
Cease then thy search, the fruitless task give o'er,
Not thine to penetrate thy God, but to adore.

XIX.

What had befallen Filippa and her child,
Had that one hour like the preceding past,
To guess were vain, and to assume were wild,
Yet in that hour their destiny seemed cast!
The fatal messenger arrived at last,
Of Carmagnola's flight the news to tell,
One moment, haply, in his speed less fast,
The after fate these victims that befel,
Awhile they might have 'scaped, and all, perchance,
been well.

XX.

For with that quick despair which woman guides,
When honour, love, or offspring are at stake,
To deeds her gentler nature ne'er abides
When aught less prized her foes attempt to shake,
Filippa now prepared that hour to take,
With her loved babe, for flight—she hoped for ever—
Passing ere matin bell the town should wake,
To the first gate, unseen, and thence endeavour
Her long lost lord to join, nor from him more to sever.

XXI.

Wrapt in a sable cloak that hid from view
Her face and form, and tender charge she bore,
All pale, and trembling at each breath she drew,
She safely reached the outer corridore;
'Twas silent, save the sigh her heart that tore,
As her sire's chamber rose upon her sight,—
She slowly passed, and in the garb she wore,
Amid the marble columns, looked like night,
Stealing from day's abode alarmed by morning light.

XXII.

Whose life has passed so pointless and so dull,
As ne'er some dreadful moment to have known,
When the whole soul, of one great object full,
Feels its existence on that moment thrown!
Oh, then its workings on the face are shown,
Then speaks the eye, while silent lies the tongue,
Quivers the lip, the cheeks no colour own,
On one last cast the faculties seem flung,
Life hangs upon a thread, as now Filippa's hung.

XXIII.

While yet within the outer court she stood,
And joyfully its wicket open hailed,
While her hopes rose, and courage seemed renewed,
A cry of "Shut the gates," her ear assailed!
At such dread sound the stoutest hearts had quail'd,
At such a time,—judge if they overpower
Filippa's strength, that e'en unurged had failed,
For she was tender as the new sprung flower
That shrinks beneath the breeze in summer's gentlest hour.

XXIV.

Swift as a wounded hart the court she crossed,
And passed the outer gate at one wild bound.
Paused on the steps, in doubt and terror lost,
Then sunk in seeming death upon the ground;
The cry to "Shut the gates," still rung around,—
Their startled keeper now came forth t' obey,
And with a clash that made the walls resound,
He closed the ponderous arch against the day,
While on the still moist sod the child and mother lay.

XXV.

But in the palace loud confusion reigned;
From its proud master to its meanest groom,
All was alarm and bustle, felt and feigned,
Though to inquire the cause none dared presume;
Men passed, and cries were heard from room to room,
As of some sudden dread of danger near;
The menials e'en broke through their wonted gloom,
And left their morning toils to talk and hear
Of treasons, plots, and wars, and coming signs of fear.

XXVI.

From the Duke's rooms whence first the clamour rung,
More active signs of coming ills were seen;
Arrests and guards where'er suspicion hung
That Carmagnola's love or trust had been.
Visconti now rushed fiercely on the scene,
His haggard eyes, unslept, seemed darting fire,
Alarm and fury raging in his mien,
He looked like some infernal god in ire,
Breathing revenge and blood, and deeds of horror dire.

XXVII.

Of traitors, rebels, renegades, he raved,
Questioned, stopped answer, threatened, questioned still;
Scarce from his fury were the minions saved
Who stood prepared to execute his will;
Hard task a tyrant's orders to fulfil,
When each new thought brings doubt, each doubt brings change,
And what seemed right is wrong, what good seems ill,
The mind revolving through the boundless range
Of fear's illusive flights, or fancy's phantoms strange.

XXVIII.

Ah, who shall paint the waywardness of power,
The dread condition, though it be, of peace,
Or fitly curse the miserable hour,
When sin to human woes brought such increase,
That never till this breathing world shall cease,
And mortal in immortal life be lost,
Shall man from man's injustice have release,
Or by his own excesses live uncrossed,
In one fell sea of strife and struggling passions tossed!

XXIX.

Not mine Visconti's wayward will to sing,
Nor of his minions the distress to draw,
For higher flights my muse prepares her wing,
Where Venice speaks, and Milan hears with awe,
Of people's rights, and liberty, and law;
Where fortune waits at vengeance's command,
And tyranny the bitter root must gnaw,
Of punishment inflicted by the hand
Of him whose ruin it perfidiously had planned.

CARMAGNOLA.

CANTO THIRD.

I.

Stretching their budded boughs across the plain,
And broadly spreading in the spring sun's beam,
The woods once more resume their leafy reign,
And the glad meads with lively verdure gleam;
Of human life an emblem they might seem,
Were this their only spring; but ah, their bloom
Revives in every year of time's long stream;—
Unmeet comparison to human doom,—
No spring returns to wake the winter of the tomb!

II.

'Tis noon, and joyfully the earth and air,
Bird, beast, and creeping thing the season hail;
The day-fly dances gaily in the glare,
Herb, shrub, and flower, on meadow, mount, and dale,
With fragrant sweets the grateful sense regale;
Man too, though seasons act not on his ways,
Save as caprice and fashion's laws prevail,
In active labour his content displays,
His food and raiment for the coming year to raise.

III.

Not for such holy ends in Milan's streets
Are crowds assembled round her ducal hall,
Nor sweet the sight, nor soft the sound that meets
The eyes and ears within her time-worn wall;
But in their stead the drum and trumpet's call,
The blaze of banners and barbaric gold,
The pomp and pageantry of power, and all
The gorgeous rites in herald's page enrolled,
When sovereign will of states by envoy's tongues is told.

IV.

For Venice, crowned with Chioggia's laurels, came
Renewed in strength, and terrible in ire,
For past, but not forgotten wrongs to claim
The high redress that nations' wrongs require;
And terror of her prowess to inspire,
Alike on tented field as trackless wave,
To tell of armaments and engines dire,
Of lanzknechts, fantassins, and leaders brave,
And all the varied hosts in inland war that rave.

V.

Of these in long array the envoy spoke
To Milan's Duke in solemn council throned;
Complained that Milan under neutral cloak
Venetian enemies as allies owned;
Of claims unsettled, insults unatoned,
And chief, that in the dungeons of the Duke,
If fame spoke true, Venetian subjects groaned,—
An outrage no free State could overlook,
And Venice, least of all, unremedied could brook.

VI.

"For one illustrious subject of the State—
Not captive, nor in dungeon, but—detained,
I have the Signory's commands to wait
Her pleasure only; had your Highness deigned
Reply to former quests, they had refrained
Till time might for her loss your heart console;
Now by their sovereign charge I am constrained
To claim, as here I do, entire control
Henceforth, of the Venetian lady—Carmagnole!"

VII.

"Venetian lady!" echoed every voice,
And one, more bold or more indignant, said—
"This style, Signor, scarce leaves to Milan choice
But to resist demands so proudly made;
Wherefore these sounding tales, this vast parade
Of camps, and troops, and armaments, and arms!
Has Milan grown of real war afraid,
Or shrinks she from its worst and heaviest harms,
That thus 'tis sought to move her by its mere alarms!

VIII.

"Since when have Milan's daughters been controlled
By lords of Venice? Are they sea-born things,
Begotten of the dogal bridegrooms bold,
Who yearly wed her with their rights and rings?
E'en as such rights the claims this envoy brings;
Yet let not Milan, like the Adrian bride,
Receive unmoved the gage her Doge flings;
No; let us meet him like the angry tide
That hurls such vain invaders from its surge-armed side!"

IX.

The blood that burnished the Venetian's cheek,
Too truly told the tone his voice would take,
If from his heart's dictation he should speak,
Or for himself alone should answer make;
But in the school of Venice taught to break
All sudden bursts, and keep his tone subdued,
While peace or future prospects were at stake,
With lips compressed, as though in thoughtful mood,
He checked his rising wrath, and thus his speech renewed:

X.

"Of Venice and her rights by land or sea,
Except as in this court I have declared,
No further charge has been assigned to me;
Extraneous taunts might therefore have been spared;
These rights to enforce by war she is prepared,
And would ere now by war have made them clear,
Had certain Milan lords her councils shared,—
But peace she seeks, peace settled and sincere,
Else whence this peaceful message, wherefore stand I here?

XI.

"If Milan common rights of States deny
To free their subjects from a foreign chain,
Milan all Europe must in arms defy,—
A thought as foolish as the deed were vain:
But most I marvel that a right so plain
As marriage tie, should doubtful favour find
'Mongst Christian men;—Saint Mary! would you stain
The laws of God that man to woman bind
In bonds insoluble by laws of human kind!

XII.

"Pass we from plaints:—My message here is done,
Your Highness will in fitting time and mode
Convey reply, but with to-morrow's sun,
God willing, back to Venice is my road;—
If then the Lady Carmagnole, bestowed
As fits her rank, shall to my charge be given,
One pledge of peace will from that act have flowed;
If not,—to holy vengeance Venice driven,
Will war for God's great law by man asunder riven."

XIII.

He ceased, and to Visconti straight were turned
The eager eyes of the assembled lords;
Each, in his several mood, to answer burned,
But till their Sovereign spoke, restrained their words;
Some with expressive gesture touched their swords,
But one, the senior of the court, alarmed
Lest o'erstretched wrath should burst discretion's cords,
And speech wax wilder as the speakers warmed,
Thus with the wand of wisdom rising rancour charmed:

XIV.

"Venice saith well that, time and manner fit,
Her plaints in all their points shall Milan meet,
Her claims consider, combat or admit,
As truth may prompt; why therefore should we treat
Their merits now, in haste, and haply, heat?
Let Venice in her course proceed or pause,
Not less shall Milan's measures be complete
For peace or war, however high the cause
Her rival state assumes, or sharp the sword she draws.

XV.

"The law of Venice claims, it seems, the wives
Of aliens with her civic garland crowned;—
The law of other nations claims the lives
Of traitor renegades wherever found;
Which for the law of God takes highest ground,
The state the traitor husband that receives,
To country, prince, and spouse already bound—
Or that which, cherishing the charge he leaves,
Th' abandoned widow comforts, and her loss retrieves?

XVI.

"My lords, all Christian states revere the band
That man to wife indissolubly ties,
But when 'tis sundered by the husband's hand
Paternal rights revive, and State's arise:
In vain doth Venice arrogate the guise
Of holy zeal, while countenance she lends
To most unholy acts in Christian eyes,
Professing bonds to knit which first she rends,
Then dares to censure Milan who these bonds defends!

XVII.

"So far of rights and laws; but to remove
All hostile feeling from each nation's breast,
At least one party's wish for peace to prove,
Let us concede as boon the one request
That Venice makes, and leave to time the rest;
So shall the Lady Carmagnole, disposed
To meet our mutual wishes, be the test
That both maintain their faith by guile unglozed,
And peace unbroken stand. My lords, my speech
is closed."

XVIII.

Applausive murmurs through the council ran,
That pre-declared unanimous assent,
But none to speak their feelings yet began,
Till of their Monarch they could learn th' intent;
While on his face their eyes once more they bent,
His thoughts to read, what find they written there?
Can what hath passed such characters indent,
Where all before was seeming smooth and fair,
And change stern haughtiness to horror and despair!

XIX.

Is this Visconti's proud imperious air,—
This drooping eye and bloodless lip and cheek!
Why doth he gasp, and gaze with vacant glare,
Seeming in others' looks relief to seek,
And find it not? Cannot Visconti speak!
Is he whose words came thundering from his tongue,
When ruin they could hurl or vengeance wreak,
Deprived of speech his parasites among,
Where late with awe all ears upon his accents hung!

XX.

He who a daughter from her home hath flung
In some vindictive mood of wrath or pride,
May tell the pangs his heart that would have wrung
If from his unjust anger she had died;
But far less dire such virtual filiacide,
Than when the conscience, charged with murd'rous deeds,
With strong paternal feelings on its side,
Tortures the wretch whose heart already bleeds
From wounds that each renewal festers as it feeds.

XXI.

From such fell wounds Visconti's bosom heaved,—
And now strange sights before his eyeballs swim,
Visions of crimes committed and conceived,
And spectral shadows, ghastly, gaunt, and grim;
His daughter murdered, as he deemed, by him,
In stern but weeping anguish, seems to implore,
Heaven's vengeance on her sire; his eyes grow dim—
He reels—his limbs can bear their weight no more,
He shrieks—and choked in blood, sinks senseless on the floor!

XXII.

"Help, help, dissolve the hall, his Highness faints"—
The attendants shout; while fear with pallid hue
Each wondering visage of the assembly paints,
Till with the weltering load the grooms withdrew;
Ill had it seemed discussion to renew,
And hopeless royalty's return to wait;
The awe-struck lords retired in order due,
The envoy followed in heraldic state,
All deep in mute reflection on impending fate.

XXIII.

But on the mind and body of the Duke
Disease, remorse, and fear such havoc made,
That scarce physicians unappalled could look
On human frame so felly overlaid;
With furious ravings he repelled all aid,
Internal workings of the heated brain
Convulsive strength to every nerve conveyed,
While still on air-drawn shapes his eyeballs strain,
And still he weeps, laughs, shrieks, and curses most profane.

XXIV.

Needs not to tell the phantoms, conscience-born,
That seared his soul, save one, most dread of all,
His daughter, in some mode mysterious, torn
(Alive or dead he knew not,) from his hall,
Nay, from his arms, for he could not recall
The time her presence and her loss between,
Nor think how aught of evil could befal,
Or flight or death, without apparent mean,
To trace how, where, and when such flight or death had been.

XXV.

For searched had Milan been within the hour
That saw her with her child in chamber sit,
Examined every window, wall, and tower,
On every side; dragged every well and pit,
That could and could not human form admit,
Bribes, tortures, threats, had all in vain been used,
To force confession where suspicion lit,
Till now men's tongues were gradually loosed,
And of the hidden deed its real cause accused.

XXVI.

Foul whisperings the general ear abused,
From those who witnessed the revolting sight,
When horror and alarm the Duke diffused
Through every breast, on that eventful night,
Whence dated now his daughter's death or flight;
Men, shuddering, recalled a guiltless wife
By royal mandate murdered, and in spite
Of well-played mystery, deemed a daughter's life
A like fit sacrifice to blood-stained parent's knife.

XXVII.

Meantime the Duke the wild delusion held,
That heaven by special act his child had freed
From all her woes, and in that act had knelled
The eternal doom for all his crimes decreed.
While with returning sense each horrid deed
That seared his conscience, rose in black array,
For none more fiercely did his bosom bleed,
Than this unfathomed last that on it lay,
His daughter, dead or living, rapt unseen away.

XXVIII.

The envoy to his purpose had adhered;
And now of war each coming hour gave sign,
For Venice in the Lombard field appeared,
Leagued with the Savoyard and Florentine;
And Milan's chiefs their armaments combine
Beneath the Malatesti's favoured star,
The Sforza, Piccinino, and a line
Of counts and condottieri from afar,
In all the blaze of arts that then bedizened war.

XXIX.

Oh for one lay of that celestial lyre,
That to the listening world enraptured sung
Of England's warriors, in such words of fire,
That from the strain new deeds of valour sprung,—
One living lay these laggard lines among,
Each leader, banner, crest, and cross to name,
Knights, lancemen, fantassins, and all that hung
In gorgeous show around them, as they came,
A galaxy of glory in the sky of fame!

XXX.

But ah! that mightiest minstrel, in an age
Of England's minstrelsy the brightest, 'plained
That themes "for Milton's fire or Homer's rage,"
Were all unfit by him to be sustained!
And in an age when minstrelsy's disdained,
Shall one, the meanest of the sons of song,
In lore untutored, and in art untrained,
Presume to emulate the immortal throng
To whose heart-stirring harps alone such themes belong!

XXXI.

Away,—I tell an old and too true tale,
Already told to past and future time,
Where'er Italian chronicles prevail,
Those records black of cruelty and crime:
Ye who thus far have listened to my rhyme,
Not for its worth, alas! but to beguile
Your thoughts from things more serious or sublime—
Oh, still continue your indulgent smile,
And sympathy and patience grant me yet awhile.

CARMAGNOLA.

CANTO FOURTH.

I.

Is there no muse in these last days of song,
To weep extinguished empires, states undone?
And didst thou, Venice, of thy brilliant throng
No poet leave to chant thy death song? None!
Oh, thou wert once of poesy the sun,
Beneath thy genial ray her eldest born,
In youth and age their brightest laurels won,
Now of their progeny the silent scorn,
Thou sink'st, in native slime, forgotten and forlorn!

II.

Forgotten in thy fall save by the few
Who think of what must be by what hath been;
Forlorn save as a beacon to the view
Of nations round thee who thy fall have seen.
Alas! thou glitterest in thy wave serene,
A gorgeous wreck that nations disavow;
No more the muses haunt thy masquing scene,
No more thy chaplets bind the poet's brow,
Thou canst not move one bard to weep as I weep now!

III.

Yet fitly art thou judged, and justly loathed,
Thou first of Christian states where terror reigned,
Where power was law, and law in murder clothed,
By torture forced from truth the guilt it feigned:
Monster of vice, with every horror stained,
That man with fiends unites in endless woe,
The world reveres the doom for thee ordained,
Its justice pleaseth, as thy crimes they know,
As learned Daru hath shown, and this my tale shall show.

IV.

Twilight's gray lustre gradually sinks,
And gently blending with the moon's pale ray,
The mingled light in silent softness links
The night's first orbit to the last of day;
'Tis autumn's breezes on the plain that play,
Where Oglio's floods each vacant pool have filled,
That late in summer's arid torpor lay,
A noxious flat, untrodden and untilled,
Now doomed with blood to flow,—so chance of war hath willed.

V.

For far as eye can reach on either side,
Where rugged heights the blue horizon bound,
Two mighty hosts the morning's dawn abide,
To measure strength on chosen battle ground;
For Milan, Malatesti the renowned
A varied band of valiant strangers brings,
Four generals, with foreign laurels crowned,
And sons of past, and sires of future kings,
To battle borne from far on glory's golden wings.

VI.

For Venice muster on th' opposing height,
In number, not in valour less, a band
Of native warriors, skilled in varied fight;
In painful stillness heavy-armed they stand,
But in yon countless mounds of earth and sand
That seem spontaneous risings of the field,
The skilful chieftain hidden holds hath planned,
Where archers crouch, and lancemen lie concealed,
Till secret sign shall bid their force to be revealed.

VII.

Oh, now to Carmagnola's mind his wrongs
In all the bitterness of memory rise,
And vengeance deep as to their guilt belongs,
Invites his grasp and gleams before his eyes.
His the Venetian host that yonder lies,
Through his designs of triumph so secure,
That to withdraw his force and yield his prize,
Some Milan chiefs have tried each tempting lure
Of gold and golden words their own retreat t'ensure.

VIII.

But loftier thoughts in Carmagnola's heart
Prevailed o'er promised good or present gain,
And his designs to penetrate or thwart,
Bribes, promises, and lures alike are vain;
And now their secret mission to restrain,
And Venice of her jealous fears to free,
(The false still fear that true and faithful feign),
He had proclaimed that death the fate should be
Of all from Milan's camp arriving secretly.

IX.

Behold him on that ever cherished steed,
His saviour once, his loved companion still,
From rank to rank, and post to post proceed,
To cheer his troops and laud their captain's skill;
Lo, as he sinks in shadow of the hill,
Two captive youths, that instant seized, are borne
By zealous guards the sentence to fulfil,
Of public death 'gainst spies and lurkers sworn,
Now doubly to be dealt ere battle of the morn.

X.

Young both, and seemingly of gentle race,
Though famine and fatigue had scarcely spared
Enough of life their lineaments to trace,
Death's pangs they seemed already to have shared.
The younger passive stood, for death prepared,
As for repose he long had ceased to know;
The elder looked as though for life he cared
Alone as it might yet avail to throw
Its last poor dregs away to ease his comrade's woe.

XI.

Ah, what can words in verse or prose avail,
To tell the agonies of soul and sense,
When corp'ral functions gradually fail
From sufferings too horribly intense
For human power in language to condense.
Not angel tongues, I ween, could speak the pangs
That tear the heart of youth and innocence,
When all of life that yet on anguish hangs,
Is held by tyrant's breath in murder's horrid fangs.

XII.

How then shall I the dismal tale relate
Of that unhappy, death-devoted pair,
Or tell what strange unfathomable fate
That moment brought Lord Carmagnola there!
Behold, he halts, and as the guards declare
The fatal truth that spies before him stand,
While pity's claims his aching bosom tear,
Stern duty's flame, by martial rigour fanned
Bursts forth, and for their death he gives the dire
command.

XIII.

Recall, recall, the hideous word recall!
From any lips atrocious, but from thine
So horrible, that when thou knowest all,
Thy soul's salvation thou would'st here resign
To stay the deed;—thou list'st not! powers divine
That guard from ills unbearable man's life,
Can fate with human blindness thus combine,
To damn a world already over rife
With deeds of hell! Lord Carmagnole hath slain—
his wife!!

XIV.

Mysterious intercourse of soul with soul,
Unowned by sense, uncertain, though defined;
Why lingers yet th' impatient Carmagnole,
His dreadful duty done, released his mind?
Why do the victims by his doom consigned
To sudden death, now first in strength revive,
And start, and gaze around, before, behind,
As if intent once more for life to strive,
New dangers to encounter, new escapes contrive!

XV.

Hah! is it told! a shriek!—heaven, earth, and sea
Not more amazed the last dread trump shall hear,
Nor more appalled, than at that shriek was he
To whose heart's core it reached unearthly clear.
Like the last trump, it brought remembrance near
Of by-gone life in all its pomp and pride,
Its woes, its bliss, its pleasures all too dear,
And chief of her, his loved and lovely bride,
Now martyred for his sake, and—dying by his side!

XVI.

Ah no—she lives—will live—'tis but a swoon—
Heaven, thus far kind, will not now cease its care,
Nor can have given, to thwart at last, the boon
Bestowed on truth at suffering virtue's prayer!
She breathes! Oh God, her husband's reason spare,
That with the first rude shock already reels,
Teach him the awful interval to bear,
Till thy dread will the coming end reveals,
Less maddening, e'en at worst, than fears which now
he feels!

XVII.

I may not speak the agony extreme
That seared his soul, now doubly deep distrest,
As life and death hung balanced in the beam
That bore his fate in one slight turn compressed!
At length with hope his sinking heart is blest,
As coming life and consciousness he sees
Displayed in opening eyes and heaving breast;
Till youth and strength, triumphant o'er disease,
The seeming dead restored by slow but sure degrees.

XVIII.

Brief let me be—for battle hour is nigh;—
Filippa, thus to life and love restored,
Is borne to shelter in a tent hard by,
Where such rough cares as soldier's means afford
In such an hour, are lavished by her lord.
Oh, Malatesti, had thy star now shone
As on the former trophies of thy sword,
How different the fate not thou alone,
But Milan, Venice, Italy, had undergone!

XIX.

While thus the one recovered captive, soothed
By gentle ministerings to slumber, lay
On couch, though hard, to her luxurious, smoothed
By peace and safety, long from her away—
The other—(oh, I cannot need to say
'Tis he, my paragon of faithful squires,)—
Advances modestly as if to pay
The accustomed homage loyalty inspires,
When vassals' feelings prompt what lords' respect requires.

XX.

But ere his tottering knee could reach the ground,
Low as he looked, and haggard to behold,
His grateful master round his neck hath wound
His willing arms, and in his ear hath told,
That henceforth not as vassal should he hold
A menial place, but as an honoured knight,
His name and services should be enrolled
By Venice, in her annals of the fight
And victory to come with morn's approaching light.

XXI.

I pass the transports such rewards excite
In youthful breasts, the general joy that spread
Throughout the camp, where hearts and tongues unite
In blessings on the rescued lady's head;
I pass the tears of grief and gladness shed
Alternate, as each portion of her tale
To suffering or successful issue led;
But sorely in my task it were to fail,
Of all her hidden fate to leave unraised the veil.

XXII.

"My gracious lord," thus spoke the squire, still faint
With sufferings past, though now with joy elate,
"The good Saint Mark, my ever fav'ring saint,
On that great night whence now my fortunes date,
Propitious stayed, and to the palace gate
Conveyed me, as I left it, all unseen,—
But my first sight—I shudder as I state—
More fear inspired than all that yet had been,—
It was my lady stretched untended on the green!

XXIII.

"Her babe beneath the cloak that hid her slept,
Nor waked as from the ground her head I raised,
While she her powerless arms around it kept,
Till life returning, in my face she gazed,
And strove to speak, and looked as though amazed
To find she lived; then, starting, with a sigh
She rose, and knew me—great Saint Mark be praised!
Few words sufficed to tell that she must fly
To save her infant's life, or for its sake to die.

XXIV.

"With eager speed the palace walls we left,
Nor paused to think what path or turn to take,
Till by fatigue of strength and breath bereft,
We stopped, unable further flight to make;
I saw hard by a clump of quickset brake,
And there to breathe unseen, my lady moved,
While I, by her command, returned to wake
Some friend whose faith and honour might be proved
For such secure retreat as Milan's blood behoved.

XXV.

"Arrived again within the gates, I found
Your flight proclaimed, your friends denounced, reviled,
Your servants seized, and some in fetters bound,
And (oh, dire prospect for your wife and child,)
Myself arrested 'mid the clamour wild
That through each quarter of the palace rung,
Where spies on spies, and guards on guards were piled,
For 'traitors,' noble, vassal, old or young,
As if to madden men some fiend from hell had sprung!

XXVI.

"What could I do? in prison rudely flung!
But yet, in blessed hour, of one I thought,
Who still was free the palace dames among,—
My mother,—and to see her I besought.
More quick than hoped she to my side was brought,
And to her ear my tale I soon conveyed;
She heard it, viewed it, felt it as she ought,
Departed instant to my lady's aid;
And thus my first worst fear was for the time allayed.

XXVII.

"Thenceforth for weary weeks I lay immured
Nor of my lady or her infant knew,
Till some kind influence my release procured,
And to my mother's home once more I flew;
I found her trembling under terrors new,
For though thus far my lady safe had passed,
Disguised as menial, every danger through,
Fresh vigour in researches now was cast,
And threatened, soon or late, discovery at last.

XXVIII.

" 'Twas then that Venice sought the hearts to gain
Of Milan's lords; and when her envoy came,
He sought the Duke's domestics to retain,—
('Tis an old system of the ocean dame,)
On this the Senate's shelter we could claim;—
'Twas thought and done; my lady in disguise
Of male attire, and in a servant's name,
Appeared with me before the envoy's eyes,
As driven from Milan's halls by Milan's injuries.

XXIX.

" The envoy looked suspicion and surprise,
But spoke not; and our story *seemed* believed;
But whether then the truth he did surmise,
Or some mysterious notice had received
(Strange things they say by Venice are achieved),
I know not, but within a little hour,
My lady was discovered, owned, relieved
Of all the ills that o'er her head did lour,
And chief of present dread of cruel parent's power.

XXX.

"All in profoundest secrecy was wrapt,—
Such secrecy as only Venice knows,
'Twas ordered that our dress we should adapt
To certain mystic signs that instant close
Venetian lips, and, masked, a part compose
Of Venice's array; thus far secured
Alike from doubtful friends and dangerous foes,
My lady with her infant, re-assured
Of safety, and with us attending, lived immured.

XXXI.

"I marvelled much at Venice's display
Of wisdom in her envoy's conduct shown,
But more, when on his parting audience-day,
He told the assembled lords, in lofty tone,
That peace or war with Venice turned alone
On Lady Carmagnole's surrender free,
While by no human power, except his own,
Could Lady Carmagnole surrendered be,
Or Milan have the choice with Venice to agree!

XXXII.

"When Venice thus inevitable war
Had fixed on Milan, ill for war prepared,
Venetian subjects as we were and are,
The envoy's escort to depart we shared;
We passed the gates unquestioned and unscared,
And journeyed slow to Padua, and thence
Had to the sea-walled city straight repaired,
But that some hidden cause did then commence
To move my Lady's mind with terrors most intense.

XXXIII.

"Nor were they to their former source confined,
For safe in Padua's palace we abode;
Some new and nameless grief oppressed her mind—
Perhaps to sickness her distress she owed,
Or from your absence her depression flowed;—
Perhaps she liked not the Provveditor—
Perhaps some disrespect or slight he showed—
Perhaps he tried—but why conjecture more,
My lady will herself her sufferings tell o'er.

XXXIV.

" Two weeks ago when first the news arrived
Of your encampment here, till then concealed,
Her ne'er abondoned hopes once more revived,
At every risk to join you in the field;
'Twas then that to my mother she revealed,
That though not prisoned, she from 'scape was barred,
And to the dire necessity must yield
Of secret flight, in some disguise, to guard
'Gainst aught that her intent might frustrate or retard.

XXXV.

" Why need I stay to tell of all that passed
Ere their designs to me they did confide;
Disguise and plans were settled, and at last,
By yesternoon, successfully were tried!
The babe was with my mother to abide,
While from the palace gate, like birri dressed,
My lady and myself should, side by side,
Walk out in haste, as though in urgent quest
Of some discovered guilt, and guilty to arrest.

XXXVI.

"'Twas done,—we passed, and from the city sped,
By guards unchallenged, and by gates unchecked,
We walked at first as public pathways led,
'Till distance could from sight our steps protect;
But when our studied pace we could neglect,
We doubled speed to Agno's side, and there,
Where swamp and sedge the valley intersect,
We crouched concealed till day's departing glare
Again the open country made it safe to dare.

XXXVII.

"All night we travelled by a track I knew,
O'er beds of marsh in summer only dry,
Nor rested till we passed the frontier through,
Between the states and Mantua that lie—
But I am faint—a moment—I will try—
Your pardon—I am—" But in vain he strove,
His parched up lips no longer would supply
His thoughts with words; his senses seemed to rove,
Entangled in the film that weakness round him wove.

XXXVIII.

They bore him to refreshment and repose,
And much his master felt how indiscreet
Had been his urgency to hear past woes,
Ere soothing present pains with solace meet.
The tale, though unconcluded, was complete,
And well its hearer all its points had scanned,
Where truth had been, where error, where deceit,
And where some future treachery seemed planned,
With all the tortuous skill at Venice's command.

XXXIX.

But in the space of these adventures strange,
The night fog thick had gathered on the plain,
The moon had sunk behind the western range
Of Alpine heights that bound the Lombard reign.
Lord Carmagnole resumed his rounds again,
To cheer the weak and reassure the brave;
With mind recovered from its recent strain,
His last commands to every post he gave,
While all around was dark and silent as the grave.

CARMAGNOLA.

CANTO FIFTH.

I.

" Oh hide thy head, abominable war,
Of crimes and ruffian idleness the child"—
So sings th' enchanting minstrel, who as far
As sweets in Indolence's castle piled
Could soothe to peace, men's senses so beguiled,
That list'ning to his rapturous appeal,
They were content to lie in sloth defiled,
And none lent selfish sympathies to feel,
In individual ease forgetting general weal;

II.

But not for peace is man's career designed
In this his world of suffering and sin;
War, horrid war, destruction of his kind,
And cruelty his savage course begin;
Nor in his progress can he 'vantage win,
Or social life or gentler virtues learn,
Save from assault without or guard within
His native soil; defence or conquest stern
The dreadful price he pays his hour of peace to earn.

III.

War is death's richest feast,—but battle plain,
In ancient times, and more in modern still,
A hideous mass of slaying and of slain,
In times of chivalry displayed less skill
In death, and haply less destructive will
In combatants,—and oft the shock of arms
Was deemed their wearer's purpose to fulfil,
Unfollowed by more deadly hurts or harms
Than mutual dint and bruise, unworthy death's alarms.

IV.

Not such had been that field of Maccalò,
That rival chiefs of Lombardy now take,
The desperate die of battle game to throw,
With victory or death indeed the stake;
For Milan had resolved in blood to slake
Her thirst of vengeance for affronted fame,
And Venice felt the hour had come to shake
The sole remaining rival of her name
For ever from her seat;—so forth the armies came.

V.

But scarce the last dread word to charge was given,
And Milan dashed impetuous to obey,
Than Venice, as by force or terror driven,
And scarce resisting, to the shock gave way.
Oh fatal speed, oh miserable day,
Oh reckless chief by rage alone engrossed,
Like lion rushing blindfold on his prey,
Thou think'st not of the snare thy feet have crossed,
Till writhing in its toils, thou sink'st, and all is lost!

VI.

Yes, hapless Malatesti, all is gone,—
Fame, vengeance, victory, at one fell sweep,
With horse and foot that now come thundering on,
Intent to aid thee, but in truth to heap
More ruin on thee in that ambush deep,
Where, shrieking in despair, amid thy foes,
Thou striv'st in vain thy footing firm to keep,
While they in countless thousands round thee close
In front, and flank, and rear, to aggravate thy woes.

VII.

Oh, shame unheard, unknown in warlike world,
Disgrace unparalleled in history's page,
A noble army to destruction hurled,
Without the power its rival to engage!
Decoyed in mire disgusting war to wage,
While enemies secure stand mocking by—
Oh, verse abjures the thought, indignant rage
Stops up its fount, and runs its channels dry,
While pity's self scarce weeps that shame in arms should die,

VIII.

But e'en this mercy Milan's foes deny,
So sure their power, their triumph so complete,
They leave the soil-bound host unhurt to lie,
Till council summoned of their fate to treat;
Meantime exhausted at their conquerors' feet,
What but submission absolute remained
To close such irretrievable defeat!
And thus the army, arms, and armour stained
That Milan lost, by Venice without loss was gained!

IX.

Emerging slowly from that fatal sink,
Unhorsed, disarmed, and prisoners they stand,
Like souls arriving on the Stygian brink,
In dread of doom, a melancholy band;
But when the evening shades o'erspread the land,
Most wond'rous change the whole encampment showed,
For the Venetian troops, without command
Or law of war (except in mercy's code),
Renounced all private rights that from their conquest flowed;

X.

And liberty unqualified bestowed
On all who to their lot as captives fell,
While captive hearts with grateful ardour glowed,
That battle lost had friendship won so well.
Now shouts of joy the midnight breezes swell,
The jest, the glass, the soldier's tale goes round,
Old comrades meet, new friends of old friends tell,
Mirth, social glee, and gaiety abound
In that mellifluous tongue 'tis melody to sound.

XI.

Oh, rare result of savage man's design,
His fellow-man to slaughter or enslave;
Strife turned to love, to friendship hate malign,
Joy gained for grief, the banquet for the grave!
These were the triumphs Carmagnola gave
To Venice o'er her rival, with such spoil
As ne'er in battle won on land or wave,
Had followed from Venetian victor's toil,
Unbought by loss or stain that victor's wreath could soil.

XII.

But when next morn he too did free declare
The Milan captives to himself assigned,
And Malatesti did invite to share
His tent and table, seeming so to bind
In gratitude his ancient comrade's mind—
'Twas noticed the provveditors betrayed,
At least in looks of an expressive kind,
Some inward feelings, though they nothing said
To sanction or condemn the choice the chief had made.

XIII.

Kind listener to my lay, whoe'er thou art,
Grave senior, man matured, or sprightly boy,
Or (if I may creation's lovelier part
Include,) sage matron, dame, or damsel coy,
Deem not that verse of mine can speak the joy
That now o'erwhelmed Filippa and her lord,
When doubts and fears no more their minds annoy,
But with their wishes all events accord,
As if their future life with nought but bliss were stored.

XIV.

Deem not that verse of mine could fitly sing
The praises heaped on Carmagnola's head,
Or tell th' applause that through the world did ring
Where'er the bruit of Maccalò was spread.
From Venice thanks in golden showers were shed,
And honours rich as merchant-kings bestow,
By public zeal and love of country led,
Their sense of worth and gratitude to show,
For valour that has freed their land from foreign foe.

XV.

No, not for me to touch the chords sublime,
Whence burst the sounds that human hearts enthral,
Omnipotent o'er passion, space and time,
To raise and quell, embody and recall.
Their powers I wield not, but I know them all,
And could my feelings give my verse their tone,
It would arouse, subdue, elate, appal,
In strains that proudest minstrel well might own,
By fame's most potent trump all worthy to be blown!

XVI.

But my tale's close I can no more defer,
Though from the task my aching soul recoils,
For this of battle is not (would it were!)
The closing scene or limit of my toils;
I have described it simply as it soils
The annals of the time;—who seeketh more
May find it in those books of blood and broils
That cumber Italy's vast archives o'er,—
The base, alas! and bane of her historic lore.

XVII.

Speed we our course;—disease, defeat, and fear,
The humbled Duke of Milan so subdued,
That e'er the dogs of war should come more near
And hunt him from his seat, for peace he sued:
His child, whose flight at last he understood
And pardoned, he implored to intercede
For lenient terms; and bitter now he rued
The jealous haste that from his power had freed
That chief who ne'er had failed to victory to lead.

XVIII.

The gentle wife was gentle daughter still,
Nor did the husband urgent prayer require
To bend himself and army to her will,
And grant her suit in mercy to her sire.
Meantime the Duke the senate to inspire
With peaceful thoughts, his utmost arts essayed
At Venice, to avert the threatening ire;
And by ambassadors his will conveyed
That to her loftiest claims submission should be made.

XIX.

Time passed, and with it armies power to act
Till season should again the fields prepare,
And Milan's chiefs unpressed and unattacked,
To new equipments could devote their care.
But Venice,—when to punish, when to spare
A prostrate enemy, profoundly skilled,—
Was now inclined his ruin to forbear,
Content with conquests gained and coffers filled,—
But ah! one triumph,—true Venetian,—yet she willed.

XX.

When nought remained for statesmen but to stamp
Agreed-on treaties with their sanction grave,
A mission came to Carmagnola's camp,
His presence at the conncil-board to crave;
It looked like honour, and opinion gave
By warrior ever most of all esteemed,
That, wise in council as in battle brave,
Of civic service he was worthy deemed,
And fit for diplomatic arts and duties seemed.

XXI.

But wherefore starts Filippa at the news,—
Turn pale, and urge her wondering lord to pause
Ere answer made; and why such efforts use
T' imagine, find, or fabricate a cause
For disobedience of the senate's laws?
Is there indeed? alas! she knows of none,—
It is a nation's tribute of applause,
Its crowning guerdon for the service done,
To slight it were as if the world should slight the sun!

XXII.

So reasoned she, but not so felt,—some power
More strong than reason reason undermined;
'Twas founded on remembrance of the hour
When first her fate with Venice was combined:
She knew deception of the basest kind
And cruelty the senate ruled,—she knew
Some treachery against herself designed
At Padua, whose lord had dared to sue
Her love, and striv'n by fraud her honour to subdue.

XXIII.

These and the nameless fears that agitate
The ever watchful wife-and-mother breast,
Induced the gentle dame to deprecate
Her lord's compliance with the senate's quest.
"Be it," she said, "Filippa's mind impressed
With false or foolish terrors, they are her's,
Who never yet ungranted prayer addressed
To him who loves her even when she errs,
And now—I see it by his smile, her boon confers."

XXIV.

"Filippa, thou whose wishes 'tis my joy
To anticipate and yield, canst thou indeed
Thy never failing eloquence employ
To turn thy husband from this grateful meed
Of glory? Thou wert wont his cause to plead
For honours slight, and to the million shown,
And now when honour never yet decreed
To foreign soldier, at his feet is thrown,
'Tis spurned—thou own'st thou know'st not why,—
by thee alone!"

XXV.

Thus answered Carmagnola, and detailed
In tenderest terms such reasons to comply,
As o'er the lady's prejudice prevailed,
Though fear still blanched her cheek and filled
her eye;
Consenting to conviction with a sigh,
Sad sign of heart not altered, but outworn,
She still with horror heard her lord's reply
To Venice, through the Avvogadori borne,
That he, his dame and squires should follow them at
morn.

XXVI.

Heaven, still more kind in what it hides than shows,
In what it holds than gives, now deigned to bless
Lord Carmagnola with that peace which flows
From long-borne labour crowned with full success;
All nature seemed to share his happiness,
As from his couch arising at the dawn,
He saw the sun in purple splendour dress
Each distant hill, and vale, and nearer lawn,
Where to salute their chief a chosen band was drawn.

XXVII.

They travelled o'er that lovely track of land,
Alike to warriors, bards, and scholars dear,
Where Hannibal great Rome's destruction planned,
And Maro rose her deathless fame to rear;
And when to towns and castles they came near,
Rejoicings rent the air, triumphal bays
In streets, on walls, and gates, and towers appear,
The victor's glory to its height to raise,
And to the senate's prizes add the people's praise.

XXVIII.

Arrived at Venice, higher honours still
On every side the conqu'ror's coming wait;
The citizens the banks and barges fill,
The senate's zeal to spread and emulate.
The Doge with his train, in solemn state,
Came forth to welcome the illustrious guest,
And with a chain his neck to decorate;
Oh, never nation's feelings were expressed,
In words or deeds more fair than now to him addressed.

XXIX.

The Doge for the princess orders gave
To lodge within the ducal halls apart,
While to the senate, then in close conclave,
He led the chief, exulting in his heart:
Yet even then Filippa with a start,
As from some sudden flash of inward light,
Received the order from her lord to part,
And shook with agitation and affright,
As at the column's base he left her aching sight.

XXX.

But full of joy and gaiety was he,
Beyond his wont, although by nature gay,
The standers-by remarked admiringly,
That scarce the unconscious death-doomed could display
More wild delight; and some more sage did say
'Twas sinful so to speak; the Doge frowned,
Incredulous of both, and led the way
Through guarded paths above and under ground,
Till at the senates' hall themselves at length they found.

XXXI.

There sat that black, suspicion-guided corps,
Of by-gone times the wonder and the dread,
Whose chronicles are writ in human gore
In dungeons scattered or on scaffolds shed;
Whom never pity moved, or mercy led
The rack, the pincer, or the wheel to spare,
From victims, till their hour of torture fed,
Like lambs for slaughter, on the flattering fare
Of honours, courtesies, and condescensions rare.

XXXII.

There sat that "potent, grave, and reverend" fraud,
Whose very darkness dazzled; well might those
Admitted to its mysteries be awed,
And on their lips and looks restraint impose:
But at Lord Carmagnole's approach they rose,
And with such cordial welcome did him greet,
That awe gave place to confident repose
In faith so vouched, and when he took the seat
To highest rank assigned, his glory was complete.

XXXIII.

Of grave affairs, and chief of peace or war
With Milan, keen debate the session held,
And ever as opinions seemed to jar,
The General's voice the cause of difference quelled,
For he in council as in camp excelled;
And much the fathers praised his varied power
In eloquence and arms; they...midnight knelled,—
They rise,—they whisper—yes—it is the hour,—
Good night—and parting blessings on their guest
they shower!

XXXIV.

Oh, now indeed cold horror chills my frame,
My heartstrings scarce their bursting burden hold,
For I must tell of deeds without a name
In annals of atrocity enrolled;
What human tongue can infamy unfold
That human reason shudders to believe
Of beings cast in human nature's mould!
But it must be,—albeit the task bereave
My brain of energy, my fancy vacant leave.

XXXV.

Ere yet Lord Carmagnole had reached the porch
Of that still lengthening range of roof and wall,
A fiend-like figure with a flaring torch,
And masked and hooded in sepulchral pall,
Beside him stood, and with a muttering call,
"This way, sir Count, your egress lies," he said,
Then ere by flight his grasp he could forestall
Hurled him thro' sloping vaults that downward led
To dungeons dug beneath the ocean's deepest bed!

XXXVI.

Seized, gagged, and manacled by waiting guards,
Who though in darkness, moved as if in light,
And swiftly borne through winding paths and wards
Of regions sunk in worse than endless night,
He stood, in fainting horror at the sight,
Within a chamber, where in hideous show,
Racks, screws, and pulleys lay, and fires burned bright,
Where cauldrons boil, and red-hot pincers glow,
To extort the shrieking lie that leads to death from woe.

XXXVII.

It is a dream,—he suffers often such,—
He will awake, as oft before, to find
He knew not when he slept, and with a touch—
"Filippa—she hath risen—heaven guard my mind!
These manacles seem yet my hands to bind,—
I cannot part them!—Darkness!—Can it be!"—
'Twas thus that, inly reasoning, he assigned
To brief illusion the reality
That soon through every sense was proved most direfully.

XXXVIII.

Well might he doubt those senses, for they showed
Arrayed in judgment seat, the self-same men
From whom, a breath ago, such praises flowed
Of him as soldier, sage, and citizen,
As ne'er were spoke by tongue or writ by pen!
Now upon self-refuting charges, feigned
For his destruction, in this loathsome den,
By them condemned as swiftly as arraigned,
To doom himself to death on bed of torture chained!

XXXIX.

Monsters in human form—but wherefore seek
By epithets their characters to tell!—
As vainly might'st thou hope by groan or shriek,
To move them in that chancery of hell
Where never mercy dwelt or truth could dwell;
Yet rack and wedge and screw are sometimes vain
To extract the wished confession; so it fell
With Carmagnola, till more subtle pain
The spirit reached, and through the body seared the brain.

XL.

Ask me no more. "He hath confessed,—away,
The headsman here—the traitor's knell hath rung,—
A scaffold to the columns,—quick,—'tis day,—
His head beneath the wells, his body hung
Half column high, where other traitors, stung
With timely fears, their prospects may descry;
His wealth into the public coffers flung,
With ample means the senate will supply,
His wife and infant to endow—until they die!"

XLI.

Reader, as thus pronounced, so was it done!—
Here Carmagnola's tale to close I bring;
Thou must imagine for his wife and son,
Such lot as from such misery must spring.
Not poet's part, I ween, results to sing
Of great historic deeds on fate of those
Who for a season formed his magic ring;
Too daring, haply, to have traced their woes
In strains less fluent than their own melodious prose.

NOTES AND AUTHORITIES.

NOTES AND AUTHORITIES.

CANTO FIRST.

Stanza I.

'Tis Italy, 'tis Italy, &c.

Sismondi, in allusion to the influence of climate upon superstitious feeling, makes the following philosophical reflections:—

"Le mysticisme, de même que l'imagination rêveuse, appartiennent aux climats où l'homme souffre, sous une température, ou brûlante ou glacée. Dans les déserts de la Thebaïde, ou sur les sables du Gange, aux bords de la Baltique, ou parmi les rochers d'Ecosse, on peut trembler devant le principe du mal, qui ne laisse jamais oublier son pouvoir; on peut offrir en hommage à la divinité des douleurs qui semblent le partage de l'espèce humaine; *mais devant qui trembleroit on en Italie,*

où tout sourit à l'homme? Comment toutes les pensées se tourneroient-elles vers une autre vie, quand celle dont on jouit est si douce?"—*Sismondi, Républiques Italiennes,* v. 7, c. 48, p. 4.

But the prevalence of the principle in all ages and in every country and condition of man, proves that it is a component part of his nature, totally unconnected with time, circumstance, or locality.

Stanza iii.

A land of infamy and crime,
Unmatched on earth, and not outdone in hell.

"The ordinary vices of mankind assumed a portentous guilt in the palaces of Italian princes. Their revenge was fratricide, and their lust was incest."—*Hallam, Middle Ages,* v. 1, c. 13, p. 319.

Human agonies, inconceivable to modern times, formed part of the laws, the system of existence, and even the recreations of the Italian princes of the middle ages. Besides the extremes of judicial torture inflicted in mere wantonness, and upon accusation only, the punishment of death was in some of the states decreed to be protracted through forty days of incessant torments, and John-Maria Visconti, Duke of Milan (brother of the Philip commemorated in the text), kept a large pack of hounds for hunting and devouring in his presence in the streets, criminals, that is, prisoners previously provided for no other purpose.

STANZA V.

The serpent in their helm.

"All the historians of the fourteenth century habitually use the *viper*, *il biscione*, as a synonyme for the power of Milan."—*Hallam*, v. 1, c. 3, p. 290, note.

It was the emblem of the Visconti family, like the *pills* of the Medici, the boar, the eagle, &c., of other reigning families of the time.

STANZA V.

Through one who led his ranks, of birth so base, &c.

"François Buffo,* fils d'un paysan de Carmagnole, avoit d'abord servi comme soldat dans les troupes du Duc de Milan. Ses exploits avoient attirés sur lui l'attention et l'admiration. On le designait par le nom de sa ville natale. Le Duc l'avança rapidement, et trouva en lui une capacité égale à son courage. Le nom de Carmagnole devint si célèbre que le prince ne crut pas déshonorer le sien en l'y associant, et François-Carmagnole-Visconti devint par son mariage avec une fille naturelle du Duc, gendre de son maître, après avoir contribué à l'établir sur le trône."—*Daru, Histoire de Venise*, v. 2, b. 13, p. 321.

* Manzoni, who is more likely to be correct in the particular of an Italian name, than Daru, gives *Bussone* as the paternal name of Carmagnola,—"Francesco di Bartolomeo *Bussone* nacque, &c.—See the *Notizie Storiche* prefixed to the Tragedy of Carmagnola."

STANZA XXIII.

The lion now is slumbering o'er his book.

The well-known symbol of the republic being at peace,—*Pax tibi Marce mee,*" being the passage at which the book is opened. A sword was substituted for the book during war. It was a happy remark of the gondolier when the French had put an end for ever to peace and war, and everything else Venetian, that "The lion had turned over the leaf at last!"

CANTO SECOND.

STANZA II.

Whom partial fate from spade to sceptre called.

"On raconte que le premier Sforce, dont le vrai nom était Attendolo, étant occupé à travailler à la terre, vit passer des recruteurs qui lui proposaient de s'engager; il hésitait, et comme dans les mœurs de ce siècle, la superstition trouvait place partout, il voulut consulter le sort sur le parti qu'il avait à prendre. 'Je vais jeter ma pioche sur ce chêne,' dit-il; 'si l'arbre la retient c'est signe qui Dieu veut que je me fasse soldat.' La pioche resta dans les branches, le paysan s'enrôla dans une compagnie d'aventure, devint condottière, général illustre, prince; et son petit-fils disait à Paul-Jove dans le Palais de Milan, 'Vous voyez bien ces trésors, ces gardes, cette pompe; je dois tout cela à la branche du chêne qui retint en l'air la pioche de mon grandpère!'"—*Daru, Histoire de Venise*, v. 2, b. 13, p. 337.

CANTO THIRD.

STANZA XI.

Tyrant as was Visconti, &c.

"Le Duc Philippe Marie avoit conservé dans un caractère plus foible quelques traits de Jean Galeaz, son père. C'étoit la même ambition effeminée qui lui faisoit désirer toujours de nouvelles conquêtes, tandis qu'il n'avoit pas le courage de s'approcher de sa propre armée, ou de regarder en face des soldats. C'étoit la même politique perfide, la même conduite tortueuse par laquelle il trompoit sans cesse ses ennemis et ses amis; le même art de cacher sous chacun de ses actions une seconde fin contraire à celle qu'il paroissoit se proposer; c'étoit enfin le même mélange de générosité inattendue dans un caractère bas et cruel."—*Sismondi, Répub. Italiennes*, v. 7, c. 63, pp. 316-17.

STANZA IV.

For Venice, crowned with Chioggia's laurels, came.

The war of Chioggia in 1380, is the subject of an entire book of Daru's history, and is memorable for the most patriotic achievements and important results of the time. It gave occasion among other famous sayings, to that of Peter Doria, the Genoese Admiral, about bridling the horses on the gate of St. Mark's Cathedral. His threat *was* signally frustrated—

> "But *is* not Doria's menace come to pass?
> Are they *not* bridled?"
>
> *Childe Harold*, c. 4, st. 13.

STANZA IV.

Of armaments and engines dire.

Gunpowder and great guns were just then coming slowly and awkwardly into use. Peter Doria, mentioned in the preceding note, was killed by a stone bullet of 195 pounds weight, discharged from a bombard called the Trevisan.

STANZA V.

To Milan's Duke in solemn council throned.

"At Milan there was a council of nine hundred nobles not permanent or representative, but selected and convened at the discretion of the government throughout the reigns of the Visconti."—*Hallam, Middle Ages,* v. 1, c. 3, p. 287, note.

STANZA VIII.

Who yearly wed her with their rights and rings?

The institution and annual celebration of the marriage of the Doge to the Adriatic, are trite matters of history and of poetic reference. Otway makes Pierre bestow a strong but characteristic epithet on the bride.—See *Venice Preserved,* act ii, scene 2.

STANZA XXIII.

But on the mind and body of the Duke
Disease, &c.

"Philippe Marie, le dernier des Visconti, Ducs de Milan,

était d'une très grande taille; il avoit été fort maigre dans sa jeunesse; il prit au contraire un extrême embonpoint dans un age avancé. Son visage étoit d'une laideur presqu' effrayante, ses yeux fort grands, mais son regard toujours incertain. . . . . D'ailleurs, il étoit sombre, timide, et craignoit les éclairs, les tonnerres, les propos mêmes qui pouvoient le faire penser à la mort; son caractère et sa conduite semblent s'expliquer surtout par sa défiance continuelle de lui même et des autres."—*Sismondi, Répub. Ital.*, v. 9, b. 71, p. 261.

STANZA XXVI.

Men, shuddering, recalled a guiltless wife
By royal mandate murdered.

It was by marriage with Beatrice di Tenda, widow of General Facino Cane, that Philip Visconti gained his dukedom of Milan and other possessions. She was twenty years older than he, of a mild, generous and noble nature, qualities quite sufficient to render her hateful to her inhuman husband. He accused her of infidelity with one of the youngest of his courtiers, and put them both to the torture to extort the usual confession. The poor youth (named Michele Orombelli), very soon gave in, but Beatrice was inflexible under all that could be inflicted. She was, however, condemned to death on the testimony of her alleged accomplice, who even on the scaffold repeated his lie, in the hope of being saved. Beatrice made a most touching and pathetic appeal to him, declared her innocence, and prayed for forgiveness for her accuser. Orombelli did not gain his object by his falsehood, for they were immediately beheaded together.—See *Sismondi*, v. 8, c. 63, p. 318.

STANZAS XXIX, XXX.

But ah! that mightiest minstrel, &c.

Alluding to the "Vision of Don Roderick," the most truly poetic in conception and finished in execution of all Sir Walter Scott's works, yet he himself thought its apparent "negligence and incoherence" required an apology.

CANTO FOURTH.

STANZA II.

Forgotten in thy fall, &c.

Daru's splendid history is introduced in the following strikingly beautiful words:—

"Une république fameuse, long temps puissante, remarquable pour la singularité de son origine, de son site, et de ses institutions, a disparu de nos jours, sous nos yeux, en un moment. Cotemporaine de la plus ancienne monarchie de l'Europe, isolée par système et par sa position, elle a péri dans cette grande révolution qui a renversée tant d'autres états. Un caprice de la fortune a relevé les trônes abattus; Venise a disparu sans retour; son peuple est effacé de la liste des nations, et lorsque après ces longues tempêtes, tant d'anciens possesseurs se sont

resaisis de leurs droits, il ne s'est point trouvé d'héritier pour un si riche héritage. Depuis sa catastrophe, livrée, rendue, reprise et asservie pour toujours, à peine a-t-elle entendue des faibles voix réclamer pour elle cette pitié, dernier droit de malheur."—*Daru*, v. 1, b. 1, p. 1.

STANZA V.

For Milan, Malatesti the renowned.

"It fit venir Charles Malatesti, fils du Seigneur de Pesaro, et neveu de l'autre Charles Malatesti, Seigneur de Rimini, et il lui confia le commandement suprème de son armée."—*Sismondi, Répub. Italiennes*, v. 8, c. 65, p. 395.

STANZA V.

Four generals, with foreign laurels crowned.

"Philippe en s'éloignant de son armée de Crémone, la laissa sous le commandement de quatres généraux avec une autorité égale. Nicolas Piccinino avoit réuni presque tous les soldats de Braccio di Mentone, et rendu l'éxistence à ses bands long temps fameuses. François Sforza commandait la troupe rivale qui avoit été formée par son père. Guido Torelli avoit été mis par le duc à la tête des soldats que Carmagnole avoit rassemblés et qu'il avoit long temps conduit à la victoire. Enfin Ange de la Pergola, vielli dans les combats, avoit formé lui même sa propre armée."—*Sismondi*, as above, p. 394.

STANZA VI.

But in yon countless mounds of earth and sand.

"Les tirailleurs s'étaient postés sur tous les îlôts naturels ou artificiels qui coupaient cette plaine mouvante."—*Daru*, v. 2, b. 14, p. 375.

STANZA XIX.

'Tis he, my paragon of faithful squires.

"From seven to fourteen these boys were called pages or varlets; at fourteen they bore the name of esquire. They were instructed in the management of arms, in the art of horsemanship, in exercises of strength and activity. They became accustomed to obedience and courteous demeanour, serving their lord or lady in offices which had not yet become derogatory to honourable birth."—*Hallam, Middle Ages*, v. 2, c. 9, p. 255.

STANZA XXIX.

Or some mysterious notice had received.

"Pour commander aux hommes, il faut s'environner de quelque chose de merveilleux que saisisse leur imagination—à Venise ce merveilleux était *le mystère*."—*Daru*, v. 2, b. 14, p. 404.

CANTO FIFTH.

STANZA III.

Battle plain, &c.
In times of chivalry displayed less skill
In death, &c.

"These Italian armies of the fifteenth century have been remarked for one striking peculiarity. War has never been conducted at so little personal hazard to the soldier. Combats frequently occur in the annals of that age, wherein success, though warmly contested, cost very few lives to the vanquished." *Hallam*, v. 1, c. 3.

STANZAS IV TO XIII INCLUSIVE.

Maccalò.

The following is Sismondi's account of the battle and its results:—

"Il (Carmagnole) vint enfin le 10 Octobre (1427) attaquer le village de Maccalò, non loin de l'Oglio, et à deux ou trois milles de l'armée Milanaise, mais dans un lieu entouré de marais. Les chaleurs de l'été les avoient desséchés en partie en sorte que la croûte plus dure qui recouvroit le limon pouvoit supporter les fantassins, tandis qu'elle s'enfonçoit sous les pieds des chevaux.

Carmagnole avoit fait reconnoître soigneusement ces marais ; il en connoissoit chaque sentier praticable, et derrière chaque buisson, sur chaque plateau d'un terrain plus ferme, il avoit placé des ambuscades, tandis qu'il laissoit en apparence, sans gardes, la chaussée tortueuse qui traversoit le marais. Les soldats Milanais demandoient à grands cris le combat, et se consideroient comme insulté par la prise de Maccalò faite sous leurs yeux. Malatesti partageoit leur ressentiment, tandis que dans son conseil de guerre, plusieurs des capitaines respresentoient le danger de l'attaque. Mais le parti le plus hasardeux l'emporta, lorsque ceux qui le proposoient donnèrent à entendre que leurs adversaires manquoient de cœur. Peu de capitaines braves dans le danger, ont eu le courage plus noble et plus vertueux de braver une semblable inculpation, lorsque l'intérêt de leur armée et de leur patrie l'auroit demandé.

" L'armée Milanaise s'engagea donc tout entière la 11 Octobre, sur la chaussée étroite qui traversoit le marais. Tout-à-coup, lorsqu'elle n'était déjà plus à tems de reculer, elle fut assaillie de droit et de gauche par un volée de flèches ; à ce signal la cavalerie légère et l'infanterie de Carmagnole parurent surs lec flancs ; dès que les Milanois sortoient pour repousser l'ennemi, ils s'embourboient dans le marais, et ne pouvoient plus remuer. Une fois que la colonne fut jetée en désordre, les fantassins de Carmagnola s'avanturèrent sur la chaussée, et perçant le ventre des chevaux Milanois, ils renversèrent les cavaliers qui accablés sous le poids de leur armure, ne pouvoient plus se relever. Guido Torelli trouva moyen de s'échapper avec son fils, par un sentier qu'il découvroit au travers du marais ; Piccinino parcourant toute la chaussée se fit jour au

milieu des ennemis; Francesco Sforza retourna en arrière; mais Charles Malatesti fut fait prisonnier, avec 8,000 gens d'armes *sans qu'il y en eu, à ce qu'on assure, un seul de tué!* Tous les bagages et d'immenses richesses tombèrent au pouvoir du vainqueur.

"Mais il n'existoit plus aucune animosité entre les soldats des camps ennemis, et lorsque la bataille n'avoit pas été sanglante, elle se terminoit sans que les combattans conservassent aucun ressentiment les uns contre les autres. Les vainqueurs ne voyoient plus dans leurs prisonniers que des frères d'armes, la plupart avoient servi ensemble dans quelque guerre précédente, et avoient contractés avec des hommes devenus leurs adversaires des liens d'amitié et d'hospitalité guerrière. Presque tous ceux qui furent pris à Maccalò avoient servi sous Carmagnola, et dans le cours de la campagne ils avoient montré à plus d'une reprise que leur ancien amour pour ce général n'étoit pas étouffé. Les soldats de Carmagnola pendant la nuit que suivit leur victoire, rendirent presque tous la liberté aux soldats ennemis qu'ils avoient arrêtés. Le matin les commissaires Vénitiens se rendirent à la tente du général, lui rapprochant de laisser échapper tous les fruits de sa victoire par cette libéralité imprudente. Alors Carmagnola donna ordre qu'on amenât devant lui tous les prisonniers qui se trouvoient encore dans son camp. On n'en peut rassembler qu 400. 'Puisque mes soldats,' dit il à ceux-ci, 'ont rendu la liberté à vos frères d'armes, je ne veux pas leur céder en générosité; allez, vous êtes libres aussi!' Les Vénitiens ne temoignèrent aucun ressentiment de ce manque de déférence de leur général. Le Conseil de Dix redoubla même de prévenance envers Carmagnola; il avoit commencé à

se défier de lui, et déjà il le traitoit avec faveur comme un homme qu'il vouloit sacrifier."—*Répub. Italiennes*, v. 8, c. 65.

Stanza xiv.

From Venice thanks in golden showers were shed,
And honours rich as merchant-kings bestowed.

"Le vainqueur de Maccalò étoit revenue à Venise dès le 14 Mars. Le Doge alla au devant de lui avec la seigneurie et un nombreux cortège de patriciens. Il fit son entré sur la Bucentaure, et fut conduit en pompe jusqu'à un palais que la république lui avait donné. Une augmentation de traitement de 3,000 ducats, et un révenu de 12,000 en terres dans les provinces qu'il avait conquises attestaient la magnificence de la république."—*Daru*, v. 2, b. 14, p. 380.

Stanza xx.

A mission came to Carmagnola's camp.

"Le Conseil de Dix au commencement de l'année 1432 invita Carmagnole à se rendre à Venise pour y traiter de la paix, à laquelle la république songeoit de nouveau."—*Sismondi*, v. 8, c. 65, p. 436.

Stanzas xxviii, xxix and xxx.

"Jean François de Gonzague, Seigneur de Mantoue, l'ac-

compagnoit, et tous deux furent reçus avec les plus grands honneurs. Les hommes les plus distingués de l'état allèrent au devant de Carmagnole, et le conduisirent avec un brillant cortège jusqu' au palais du Doge. Le Sénat étoit assemblé, le général y fut introduit, on le fit asseoir à la place d'honneur, et on lui prodigua des marques de respect et d'estime. Cependant la délibération à laquelle il assistoit, et sur laquelle on paroissoit de désirer son avis, se prolongea jusque bien avant dans la nuit, et on le pressa de faire retirer sa suite, qui étoit fatigué du voyage. Dès que Carmagnole se trouva seule au milieu des sénateurs ceux-ci firent entrer leurs gardes; ils l'arrêtèrent et le chargèrent de fers. Dès le lendemain ce général fut appliqué à une dure question, et la torture de l'estrapade à laquelle on le soumit, fut rendue pour lui d'autant plus douloureuse, qu'il avoit une blessure au bras reçue au service de cette même république qui le livroit aux mains des bourreaux."—*Sismondi, ut supra.*

STANZA XXXV.

Ere yet, &c.

"Il descendit pour se retirer chez lui, et comme il traversoit la cour, 'Seigneur Conte,' lui dit il un des patriciens qui le conduisaient, 'passez de ce côté.'—'Mais ce n'est pas le chemin,' répondit Carmagnole. 'Allez, allez toujours,' reprit l'interlocuteur. Aussitôt des sbirres s'avancèrent, le général fut entouré, une porte s'ouvrit, et il fut poussé dans un couloir que

conduisait au cachot qu'on lui destinait; en y entrant il s'écria, '*Je suis perdu.*'"—*Daru*, v. 2, b. 14, p. 401.

Stanza xl.

He hath confessed, &c., *to the end.*

"On assure qu'au milieu de ses tourmens, il confessa la trahison dont on l'accusait; mais aucune preuve ne fut produit aux yeux du public ou de l'Italie, à laquelle ce grand homme appartenoit, aucune de ses dépositions ne fut publiée; c'est ne point calomnier ses juges que de les croire faussaires et prévaricateurs lorsqu'ils s'entourent d'un infame mystère. Le 5 Mai, 1432, Carmagnole fut conduit sur la place de S. Marc, avec un caillou dans la bouche, pour l'empêcher de prendre Venise à témoin de son innocence, et de devoiler toute l'ingratitude de ses oppresseurs; là, il eut la tête tranchée entre les deux colonnes qui sont devant le palais."—*Sismondi, ut supra.*

The following passage from Verdizotti, a Venetian historian, sounds very like a savage chuckle over the power of torture in producing confession:—"Fu preso di cimentarlo a' tormenti; trovossi a quello della corda per certa offesa in un braccio, incapace. *Ma datogli il fuoco, sentillo appena che vi cesse.* Confessò, &c."—*Verdizotti de' Fatti Veneti*, v. 1, b. 19, p. 446.

Although the punishment of Carmagnola did not take place immediately after the battle of Maccalò, as stated in the poem, but four years afterwards, and although he went to Venice and

returned safely in the interval, (see note to stanza xiv of canto fifth,) yet there is no doubt that his conduct after that battle was the main cause of his destruction. Verdizotti, in speaking of the liberation of the prisoners, says—"Ma un altro peccato ivi a poco da lui commesso non tanto lasciollo degno di remissione. Fè la notte di suo solo cappriccio, e senza punto parteciparne con gli altri capi e rappresentanti, porre in libertà gli otto mila prigioni e Carlo Malatesti medesimo, dando con questa seconda attione che dire assai di macchiata fede." And it was the first of the "gran' falli" imputed to him before his tortures: "Fu rimproverato degli otto mila prigioni Milanesi rilasciati da suo solo indegno cappriccio in libertà, con la persona del Generale Carlo Malatesti; donando a' nemici la perdita e defraudando alla reppubblica il vantaggio del vinto bene."—*Verdizotti de' Fatti Veneti*, v. 1, b. 19, p. 445.

Stanza xl.

His wife and infant to endow, &c.

"Indulgenti furono i padri verso l'innocenza della moglie e di due sue figlie. Assignarono ad ognuno di queste per grazia 5,000 ducati e 10,000 all' altra del danaro al magistrato degl' imprestiti, non scordandosi anco nel mezzo del rigor la clemenza dove fu permesso di usarlo."—*Verdizotti, ut supra.*

Stanza xli.

Philip Visconti died of dysentery on the 13th August, 1447, at Porta Zabbia. His life seems to have been written in twenty

volumes by Peter Candidus Decembrius. — *See Sismondi, passim.*

Manzoni, in his *Notizie Storiche*, while stating the deep impression made in Italy, and particularly in Piedmont, by the death of Carmagnola, cites an anecdote from Denina (*Revoluzioni d'Italia*, b. 10, c. 1) showing that the first suspicion which the Venetians received of the League of Cambray, was from a remark of a Piedmontese in the service of Milan, that the time would soon come when the death of his countryman Carmagnola would be amply avenged.

THE END

F. Shoberl, Printer, 51, Rupert Street.